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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [WI](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCAN PERM REP EMPHASIZES WESTERN SAHARA RED
LINES, CRITICIZES ALGERIA

Classified By: Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Moroccan Permanent Representative Ambassador Mostafa Sahel met with Poloff on August 26 to discuss regional issues and the future of negotiations on Western Sahara. Sahel emphasized Rabat's persistence in trying to broaden diplomatic and economic ties with Algiers, which according to him, Algiers always rebuffed. On the issue of Western Sahara, Sahel said Algeria was solidly behind the Polisario, which he characterized as an Algerian armed group operating in Moroccan territory. Although reiterating Rabat's red line of no independence for the region, Sahel noted that Rabat's autonomy proposal was a good starting point, and welcomed the Polisario to amend the proposal to accommodate the wishes of the Sahrawi people as long as independence was not included. In a separate meeting with Ambassador DiCarlo the following day, Sahel said the non-renewal of Peter Van Walsum's contract as the Secretary General's Personal Envoy--who claimed that an independent Western Sahara was not realistic--was an embarrassment for King Mohammed VI. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On August 26, Poloff met with Moroccan Perm Rep Ambassador Mostafa Sahel to discuss regional issues, specifically Morocco's position vis-a-vis Algeria, and Morocco's position regarding the next round of negotiations with the Polisario on Western Sahara. Sahel was unflinching in his criticism of Algeria's leaders. He said Algeria was stuck in the past, that its leaders were aged, and that despite the rest of the world moving forward with economic liberalization, Algeria stagnated in statist policies and lack of diversification. Sahel praised Rabat's efforts for trying to broaden diplomatic relations with Algiers, focusing most of its efforts on reopening the border to trade. He said that despite the fact that Algeria needs the economic relationship more than Morocco, it was Algeria that refused to entertain greater ties. According to Sahel, Algiers could claim no good relationship with any of its neighbors.

13. (C) On the issue of Algerian involvement in Western Sahara, Sahel said, "There is no Polisario without Algeria," and claimed the Polisario was nothing but "an armed wing of Algeria operating in Morocco." He questioned how Polisario representatives could travel the world and vacation in exotic places without Algerian funding. To reiterate his point of Algeria's control of the Polisario, Sahel said that he had attended the previous four rounds of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario in Manhasset and said that Polisario negotiators would excuse themselves from the talks to ostensibly receive instructions from their Algerian counterparts sitting outside the negotiation room.

14. (C) When asked by Poloff if Rabat was ready to make concessions on its autonomy proposal to accommodate the Polisario's wishes, Sahel firmly stated that Rabat was open

to suggestions and was eager to accept changes to the text. When Poloff assessed that the reason behind the Polisario's reluctance to endorse the autonomy proposal was because it did not offer an option for independence, Sahel repeatedly and unequivocally stated that independence was not an option. He added that the Polisario's insistence on independence was the sole reason why the process had not moved forward.

15. (C) Sahel described the Polisario's leadership as fascists who loathed free and open elections. He said Polisario President Abdulaziz "had an empty head" and Polisario representative in New York Boukhari was "the most radical of them all."

16. (C) Poloff relayed the broad support the Security Council had for a fifth round of negotiations this fall and that the USG, France, and Spain had all asked the Secretary General to move quickly to name a special envoy to lead the negotiations. Asked if Rabat would agree to a fifth round this fall, Sahel was non-committal, probably because he did not know who the envoy would be, but he was amenable. Sahel said he was pleased with the negotiations held thus far under UN auspices.

17. (C) Sahel the following day met with Ambassador DiCarlo and conveyed that King Mohammed VI faced embarrassment because, despite his support for Special Envoy Peter Van Walsum, Van Walsum's contract was not being renewed. The public perception, according to Sahel, was that the Polisario gained the upper hand in the negotiations with its intransigence against Van Walsum. Sahel said he learned from UN Undersecretary Lynn Pascoe that Ambassador Chris Ross would named to succeed Van Walsum. Since the King's stature

will be sullied with the Polisario's perceived "win," Sahel pressed for the USG to emphasize that a Ross appointment as envoy marked a continuation of Van Walsum's work and should not a change in the UN's approach to the talks.

COMMENT

18. (C) Sahel's comments are consistent with Rabat's statements on Western Sahara. His emphasis on Algeria rather than the Polisario reflect his view that solving the Western Sahara impasse must involve engagement with Algeria. Sahel praised the work of the United States in trying to solve this issue and hinted that direct USG involvement would be welcomed. Although delinking the parties from the UN process might take some prodding, working-level officials at UN Department of Political Affairs have expressed their desire to hand the Western Sahara issue over to a third party to mediate if doing so would move the process toward a successful conclusion. Nonetheless, Sahel, almost certainly reflecting the opinions of Moroccan leadership, appeared pleased with the UN process thus far. END COMMENT.
Wolff